

I thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and discuss the effects of the current Alternate Proficiency Assessment, mandated for all students who cannot take the Standardized Tests in New Jersey.

I agree that programs need to be accountable and a system must be in place to measure student progress. We have been involved with the APA since its inception and programs have been instituted at The Lakeview School in order to meet the needs of the APA. We have a commitment to work within the law and to provide the best education for our students possible, however, I believe that the current system is not appropriate for a number of students within our facility, and unfortunately, there currently is no other option.

Moving from 50 to 91 APA students this school year, we have felt the increase in time, money and energy. The premise of the APA is to select evidence to demonstrate the students working on the targeted skills. The students at The Lakeview School are all multiply disabled, with just a small percentage of students producing paper/pencil tasks. For the greater majority of students, we are not simply "selecting evidence," but instead creating lessons where a worksheet is used (though not functional for the students), taking photographs and captioning them and writing and asking for notes to testify to what the students are doing. When we generalize our learned skills into the community, we further draw attention to ourselves, as we take pictures and speak with store personnel in order to have evidence sheets completed. In many cases, we are not allowed to take pictures within public settings.

We have worked diligently for four months to complete an APA book for a student, including all six components to the rubric. We have taken the students on field trips to generalize their skills, established relationships with other schools to facilitate interaction with non-disabled peers and have differentiated the instruction to further validate the students' learning across disciplines. We submitted our books in March 2006 for review, to have some of them returned to Lakeview School just before Christmas 2006 with a void because our measurable criteria said "using all available modalities". When asked, I was told that this was confusing, as the students used different ways to demonstrate meeting the skill. Working with our population of students, the majority of whom have Cerebral Palsy, this is not only common, it



is encouraged. When a student does not have the stamina to use a switch to respond, or to reach for the answer, their eyes are used, or a yes/no response to questions are used. Though this is certainly best practice for our students, it is not allowed within the APA. This resulted in the void of a number of our entries, which means that no pages were reviewed and the section was rendered not able to be scored because our method of measuring criteria was deemed "confusing."

During the 2006-2007 School Year, there have had initiatives mandated, due to the Federal Government regulations. Unfortunately, when mandates are communicated in the middle of the testing period, it causes additional hardship to an already difficult situation.

The mandate to use grade-level Cumulative Progress Indicators for the coming school year will not be a true measure of our students' abilities, as we try to match a student with infant level skills to the grade eleven curriculums. The greater majority of students participating in the APA from The Lakeview School do not read, or write; their number skills are at a level of understanding what "more" means in a quantitative context (which is not considered math by APA.) I have seen the field of Education, particularly Special Education, come so far toward respecting the students for whom they are, recognizing their needs and abilities and moving them forward toward attaining realistic goals. At Lakeview School, this is done in a holistic and transdisciplinary manner; utilizing the highest technology available. Yet this is not necessarily what the APA is measuring. I find that we are returning to viewing our students as "square pegs in round holes." With the current APA system, we are trying to make our students "fit" the guidelines, when it is far out of their reach.

I am suggesting that the current APA system be changed to one which would measure the students against their level of functioning, rather than assuming that all students can work toward their grade level curriculum.

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